

**William Short to Thomas Jefferson, April 2, 1793, from
Thomas Jefferson and William Short Correspondence,
Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt,
Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**

William Short to Thomas Jefferson

Aranjuez April 2. 1793

Dear SirPrivate

Since my arrival in this country I have written to you in your public character Feb. 3 & March 6. and M. Carmichael & myself have written to you also Feb. 19. I have delayed for some time resuming my private correspondence because I wished to know a little more of this residence before speaking to you of it-& because I have been indisposed ever since my arrival in this country-& have for some time past been confined to my room, by an indisposition of the climate-or a seasoning which I have always gone through in every new country I have been to. I was getting out & going to write to you on my subject in relation to my mind, when I received on the 25th ulto. your private letter of Jan. 3. with a postscript of the 15th. This letter excited a variety of emotions in my breast, so new & so unexpected, particularly the postscript, that I found myself incapable of taking up my pen-the only soothing circumstance that presented itself was the eminent proof, it contained my dear Sir of your friendship & so far from its style needing any kind of apology as you seem to suppose I do assure you, it is the most pleasing circumstance I have experienced for a long time-& probably the most pleasing I shall experience for a long time to come. If as I understand your letter a certain person has thus cleared himself & another in throwing blame on me-or leaving me exposed to blame, where he & he alone had all the means in his hands of shewing the position in which I had been insensibly & gradually placed-if

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I say he has kept out of sight my correspondence in a case of this kind, it can only have been to have left an object to feed public ill-humour in order to divert it from himself or his favorite. Whether the one or the other be to blame is a question that I am fully disposed to leave to the public judgment-to have stated a part of the truth only in a case of that sort is safer than advancing a direct falsehood-but it is not less infamous-as it is equally deceiving those to whom it is pretended to give explanations. I was preparing to state the whole of this matter to you & to shew you by what means the delay had happened-as all my letters had done to the Sec. of the treasury-& to prove that situated as I was & had been from the month of Jany. -every consideration both of honor & delicacy forced me to begin this delay & to follow it, until M. Morris was installed in his office, into whose hands I then considered

it as passed (& who willingly undertook it)-until I received a letter from the Sec. of the Treasury on the 17th of Aug.-when it was too late to do any thing. I was preparing this business in a very agitated & enraged state of mind when I received on the 29th a letter informing me that the house of Donald & Burton had failed more than a month ago for £150,000 stlg. As you know that they had almost the whole of my fortune in their hands, you will readily conceive what an effect that had produced on me. It seems as if all the misfortunes that can befall the human lot were reserved for me & to be crowded on me at once. This has forced me to abandon the painful & provoking subject I was engaged in to take up another still more painful & distressing. The three days which have passed since I have received that information are such as I have never passed before. Although little in a condition to write to do any thing else, I set down to communicate to you this disquieting event, & under the authority of your former friendly offer to ask you aid & assistance. In a few days I will forward to you the state of the other business mentioned in the postscript of your letter-& you may rest assured beforehand that it will be such as must be approved by every body. I do not mean to say that either of the other persons in question is culpable-but this I will venture to affirm that the most prejudiced will agree I was not in fault-& indeed could not have acted otherwise whatever my dispositions might have been. I will then answer the other parts of your letter also begging you to be assured also

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in the mean time that you are very right in your opinion as to my principles of government- whatever I may think of the means made use of to set up & pull down governments employed in another country, & of which it appears my opinions or expressions have been dissatisfactory.

I proceed now to state my situation with respect to Donald & Burton. Tied down as I am here by public duty I can do nothing but write, both to London and America, fearing too much however it will be of little avail. I have written there to M. Donald begging him to let me know in what situation I am-& how much I count on his personal honor & friendship-& to let me know also whether Mr. Brown will be involved, & in general what I am to expect. M. Donald's having never written to me to inform me of this disaster, seems an extraordinary & an alarming circumstance.

In my private letter to you from the Hague of Nov. 30. I stated to you

how my affairs stood in the hands both of M. Brown and M. Donald-& left it to you decide on the propriety of having them placed in my name. In my letter of Dec. 18-I repeated the same subject to you & enclosed a letter open for Mr. Browne with the proper power of attorney to be sued in the case you should have the funds then standing in his name converted & placed in mine. These letters give me some glimmering of hope that that part may have been rescued-as I hope you recieved my letters in time. Yet as the business was there left optional, I fear that Mr. Browne may if he desired it have found means to delay it. I now inclose you a general power of attorney asking the favor of you to take whatever measures you may judge best for me in my affairs, which however may perhaps be already desperate.

I have already on former occasions informed you how these funds had passed into Mr. Browne's hands-& what kind of stupid false delicacy, which I shall rue as long as I live, had prevented my having them placed in my own name. I will now briefly repeat it. When M. Donald was in Richmond Colo. Skipwith placed a certain sum in certificates belonging to

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me, in his hands-these certificates as you know proceeded from the sale of my patrimonial state. When M. Donald left Richmond he left them in M. Browne's hands & informed me of it. I afterwards corresponded with Mr. Browne on the subject, so that he alone I suppose became answerable for them. Still I fear he will be involved of course by Messrs. D & B. He wrote me in the year 1791 that he had subscribed them being state certificates to the federal loan-& had kept them in his name for the convenience of receiving the interest-their amount as he stated them to me was 15000 dollars 6 percts. 11,256 do. 3 per cts. & 7500 do. deferred. I know not what more to add on this distressing & distracting subject than to beg you my dear Sir to be so good as to secure me if you can. If Mr. Browne is a man of honor or delicacy he will certainly have kept this deposit inviolate & sacred. It seems to me now I must have been infatuated not have had them placed in my name. Nothing but a false delicacy arising from my having the misfortune to be in public employment (for I shall ever consider it the greatest misfortune that has ever befallen me, & which now perhaps the total ruin of my fortune may force me to desire the continuance of) prevented my doing it. How differently I should now be situated! how much pain & anxiety I should have saved myself! These are sensations that no person can judge of who has not felt himself as

I know do, almost under the certainty of ruin, with all his prospects for a settlement in life, blasted. Besides this sum M. Donald kept in his hands a part of that which had been saved as I have already informed you from Mr. Parker's. This arose as you know from money which I had in Paris, that had been remitted to me from home & which I had entrusted to Mr. Parker to lay out for me. It seems as if it was destined to run the gauntlet. I have great confidence in Mr. Donald's honor-& it seems to me if he serves it he will have kept this deposit sacred & untouched by his disaster-but his having not written to me since it has befallen him staggers me much. The sum in his hands was about 6000 dollars of the several descriptions of 6 per ct. 3 per ct. & deferred.

I have heard from the commissioners at Amsterdam that you have given public notice of your intention to resign last month. I am a little embarrassed how to send you this letter-but I have determined to address it to Monticello hoping it will get safe to your hands. It will go

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by Cadiz-another shall be by Lisbon, & I will thank you to be so good as to say whether you recieve the one or the other or both. I am in the most pained & afflicted state both of mind & body, my dear Sir, your constant & unalterable friend.W.Short

RC (Jefferson Papers, DLC)